INL News Release
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Feb. 18, 2010

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INL teams with Mayo Clinic, local school for student workstation study

IDAHO FALLS – Childhood obesity and inactivity are on the rise across the U.S., and a new impact analysis study by Idaho National Laboratory in collaboration with Mayo Clinic and Hope Lutheran School will examine how vertical workstations may influence student activity, attentiveness and weight.

"Schools are becoming increasingly concerned with the rise in student obesity and inactivity, and they have been trying to find opportunities to help students become healthier," explained INL study lead Brad Snedden. "We hope our impact analysis study will provide some data for one option that may influence both student health and academic performance."

The study will follow sixth-grade students at Hope Lutheran School who are using new vertical workstation desks, similar to many ergonomic workstations used in the corporate workplace. Some schools have already purchased and implemented these workstations, assuming that they will improve student activity and attentiveness and reduce obesity. This INL study is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of these workstations in the classroom.

"These types of school programs have the potential to offer healthy weight and lives to millions of children – should they prove to be successful," said Mayo Clinic endocrinologist and obesity researcher Dr. James Levine, who is collaborating in the project.

INL will use data from class observations, regular weigh-ins and pedometers to answer questions about the workstations' impact on student attentiveness, body weight, daily activity, and fatigue or discomfort. INL will analyze this data in collaboration with Mayo Clinic's Non-exercise Activity Thermogenesis (NEAT) lab, which studies how calories are expended in non-exercise settings among varying populations and environments to improve active health.

INL is recognized as a DOE-VPP STAR site, the highest achievement level for outstanding safety and health programs within the Department of Energy. This distinction encourages the laboratory to participate in community outreach activities such as this study.

INL is one of the DOE's 10 multiprogram national laboratories. The laboratory performs work in each of the strategic goal areas of DOE: energy, national security, science and environment. INL is the nation's leading center for nuclear energy research and development. Day-to-day management and operation of the laboratory is the responsibility of Battelle Energy Alliance.

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—INL-10-004—

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